

BREAKING THROUGH LANGUAGE BARRIERS: THE IMPORTANCE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING IN AN ERA OF GLOBALISATION

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Abstract

The modern era of globalisation has fostered the importance of foreign language learning, where the need to communicate across cultures and participate in the global job market is increasing. This research uses the literature review method. The results show that globalisation has connected countries around the world, making it imperative for individuals to master more than one language to maintain competitiveness and relevance in the global market. In addition to economic benefits, learning a foreign language also contributes to personal development, such as improved memory, problem-solving ability, and individual creativity. However, learning a foreign language also presents various obstacles, such as time constraints, difficulty understanding new phonetics and grammar, and cultural barriers. The lack of exposure and practice with native speakers can compound the process of achieving fluency. To overcome these challenges, strong support, access to effective learning resources, and utilisation of modern technology and innovative methods are inevitable. Technology provides interactive platforms and educational resources that ease the learning process, making it more flexible and affordable.

Keywords: Foreign Language, Globalisation.

Introduction

The age of globalisation has brought about fundamental transformations in various aspects of human life, including in the fields of education and communication. Globalisation not only involves the free flow of goods and services between countries, but also demands the rapid and efficient exchange of information and knowledge. In this context, the ability to communicate in a foreign language has become increasingly important (Sitopu et al., 2024); (Guna et al., 2024).

Proficiency in a foreign language is no longer considered an additional skill, but rather a basic need that can open up various opportunities, both in careers and in social life. Individuals who are proficient in more than one language have a competitive

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advantage in the global job market, are better able to understand and appreciate diverse cultures, and are able to adapt better in varied environments (Xiang, 2024).

Language is one of the main communication tools that enable humans to interact, exchange information, and build relationships. In a global context, foreign language proficiency plays an increasingly vital role as the world today is increasingly connected through information technology, international trade and global culture (Balanaieva et al., 2022). Modern society is often involved in cross-cultural and cross-national interactions, both in professional and personal aspects. Therefore, mastering a foreign language not only broadens one's knowledge of the world, but also enhances an individual's ability to actively participate in the global community.

The ability to communicate in more than one language opens up limitless opportunities in various fields. For example, in the business world, foreign language skills enable one to collaborate with international partners, understand the global market, and increase competitiveness at the international level. In education and research, foreign language skills allow access to a wider range of scholarly papers and resources, and facilitate collaboration with researchers from different countries (Sulaiman, 2020). In addition, effective cross-cultural communication can also help in strengthening social relations and diplomacy between countries, ultimately contributing to better international peace and co-operation. In this age of globalisation, foreign language skills are key to unlocking opportunities and bridging cultural differences, thus enriching people's experience and understanding of the world (Klimova, 2021).

In the era of digitalisation, geographical borders are becoming increasingly blurred with the development of information and communication technologies that enable the rapid and widespread exchange of information. As a result, the ability to communicate in multiple languages has become very important. Not only for professional purposes, but also for social and cultural purposes (Ali & Anwar, 2021). In today's world of work, many companies that run cross-border business operations require employees who are proficient in foreign languages in order to communicate effectively with clients, co-workers, and business partners in different parts of the world. Foreign language proficiency also allows one to deeply understand global markets and the uniqueness of local cultures, thus facilitating international co-operation to be more effective and efficient (Waddington, 2021).

In addition, in the realm of education, globalisation has increased the need for foreign language skills. Educational institutions in various countries now often offer foreign language study programmes or require students to master a certain language as an academic requirement. Access to the latest scientific and research literature, the majority of which is available in English, for example, demands mastery of the language by academics and researchers to remain relevant and competitive (Aghayeva, 2023). In addition, student exchange programmes and collaborations between universities from different countries are growing, demanding good foreign language skills to adapt to and fully benefit from such cross-cultural experiences. Thus, globalisation not only increases

the technical need to learn foreign languages, but also fosters an appreciation of the importance of cultural diversity in global interactions (Orakcı & Gelişli, 2024).

However, in reality, there are still many challenges to learning a foreign language. In many countries, the formal education system often does not pay sufficient attention to the importance of effective foreign language teaching. In addition, factors such as student learning motivation, teaching methods used, and the availability of supporting resources also affect the success of foreign language learning (Calafato, 2023); (Volkova, 2021).

This research aims to review the relevant literature on foreign language learning in the digitalisation era, focusing on the importance and challenges of learning a foreign language. By delving deeper into this issue, it is hoped that this research can provide useful insights for educational institutions, educators, and policy makers in formulating more effective strategies to improve foreign language proficiency among students.

Research Methods

In this study, researchers used the literature research method. The literature research method is one approach in research that involves collecting, analysing, and presenting information from various secondary text sources relevant to a particular topic. This research is usually done by identifying and collecting data from books, journal articles, research reports, and other reliable sources. (Firman, 2018); (Suyitno, 2021); (junaid, 2018).

Results and Discussion

Definitions and Basic Concepts

Globalisation is a naturally occurring process of interaction and integration between individuals, companies and governments from different countries around the world, driven by increasing cross-border trade, large-scale investment and advanced communication tools such as the internet and mobile networks. This natural process results in the free flow of ideas, cultures, goods or services from one place to another, without being limited by the original geographical boundaries, which in turn affects economic, social, political, and even cultural aspects everywhere (Hairiyanto et al., 2024). Globalisation brings complex and intersecting impacts in all areas of human life wherever they are, opening up new opportunities as well as new challenges that must be faced. This transformation allows for closer linkages between countries, but also requires local adjustments in order to optimally harness its benefits and minimise its risks (Ohki & Cross, 2024).

Learning a foreign language is the process by which a person learns and develops the ability to speak, understand, read, and write in a language other than his or her mother tongue. This process involves various methods and approaches, such as direct learning in the classroom, the use of advanced technology such as the internet, and real communication practices with native speakers and peers (Xialing et al., 2022). Learning a foreign language not only emphasises aspects of the language itself such as grammar, vocabulary, intonation, but also involves understanding the culture, customs, and social

context inherent in the language (Efron & Mori, 2023). Thus, a person is not only able to use the language from a technical point of view, but also able to communicate effectively and thoroughly in various situations.

The benefits of learning a foreign language are vast and include personal, academic, and even professional aspects. From a personal perspective, learning a foreign language can improve thinking abilities, such as memory and problem-solving skills, and open doors to new cultural realms (Nkrumah, 2021). Academically, foreign language proficiency is often a requirement for accessing scientific literature, joining international study programmes, and participating in student exchanges. In the professional world, skills in foreign languages can expand career opportunities, enable better communication in global business contexts, and expand professional networks (Lütge & Merse, 2022). Therefore, learning a foreign language is a worthwhile investment for self-development and goal achievement in various areas of life.

Benefits of Foreign Language Learning

Learning a foreign language has a significant impact in improving one's cognitive quality and analytical skills. Research shows that people who speak more than one language tend to have better memory ability, creative thinking ability, and better multitasking skills (Peterson & Jabbari, 2022). The process of learning a new language involves complex mental activities such as remembering new vocabulary, understanding and applying grammar rules, and distinguishing and producing different sounds or intonations. These activities stimulate the brain and improve cognitive function, which in turn can improve an individual's ability in various other mental activities (Taguchi, 2020).

In addition, learning a foreign language also improves analytical and problem-solving skills. A person learning a new language must often analyse sentence structure and context to understand the meaning of unfamiliar words or phrases. This process involves critical thinking and intense analysis, which can strengthen one's ability to evaluate information objectively and make fact-based decisions (Rintaningrum & Rahmatullah, 2021). In other words, the analytical skills gained from learning a foreign language not only help in the acquisition of the language itself, but are also applied in a variety of other contexts, both academic and professional, thus enhancing an individual's overall capabilities (Gesa & Miralpeix, 2021).

Learning a foreign language plays an important role in improving social interactions and allowing individuals to communicate more effectively and widely. One of the main benefits of mastering a foreign language is the ability to interact with native speakers and linguistically diverse communities. This opens up opportunities to form new relationships, both personally and professionally, that might not otherwise have been realised (York, 2023). In an increasingly connected global environment, having this ability gives individuals a competitive advantage, eases intercultural collaboration and enhances social networks. This is important in the context of business, education, tourism and various other sectors where communication across languages is key to success (Waloyo, 2024).

Besides enhancing social interaction, foreign language learning also deepens cross-cultural understanding. As one learns a new language, they are also introduced to the values, traditions and norms of the native-speaking society of the language. This understanding helps eliminate prejudice and promotes tolerance and respect for cultural differences (Alamdari & Ghani, 2021). Thus, individuals become more empathetic and skilful in navigating intercultural situations, which reduces the risk of misunderstanding and conflict. This cultural sensitivity is crucial in a multicultural world, supporting harmonious international cooperation and a deeper appreciation of global diversity.

Foreign language proficiency provides significant economic advantages, especially in terms of career opportunities and professional mobility. In an increasingly globalised business world, companies are looking for employees who can communicate with partners, customers and clients from different language backgrounds (Meyer et al., 2022). Mastery of foreign languages increases competitiveness in the job market, opening up a wide range of career opportunities in multinational corporations, international institutions and other sectors focused on international trade. Employees who speak more than one language are often considered a valuable asset as they can help companies penetrate new markets, understand the needs of foreign clients, and support stable and sustainable business relationships (Reinhardt, 2020).

Moreover, foreign language proficiency also supports greater professional mobility. Many companies offer transfer opportunities or overseas placements to employees with foreign language skills, giving them the chance to live and work in another country. This opportunity not only enriches individuals' professional experience, but also increases their professional network internationally (McConachy, 2023). With increased cross-cultural experience and skills, individuals can not only achieve higher positions in the corporate hierarchy, but also gain new knowledge and perspectives that are beneficial for long-term career development. This mobility also provides significant economic benefits, both in terms of salaries and incentives which are typically higher for international positions (Xu & Wang, 2023).

As such, foreign language learning brings a range of significant benefits across different aspects of life. Cognitively, mastering a new language improves brain function, memory ability, creative thinking and analytical skills, all of which contribute to better mental development. Socially, foreign language proficiency paves the way for wider and deeper interactions with people from different backgrounds and enriches cross-cultural understanding, which is important in promoting tolerance and international co-operation.

On the economic side, foreign language acquisition expands career opportunities and enhances professional mobility. Multilingual employees are more valued in the international labour market and have access to strategic positions within multinational corporations. Thus, individuals not only improve their competitiveness and career prospects but also acquire valuable skills and experience that support professional success in a dynamic global environment. Taken together, these benefits suggest that investing in

foreign language learning is a strategic move that brings extensive and sustainable cognitive, social and economic benefits.

Challenges in Foreign Language Learning

Foreign language study offers significant cognitive, social and financial benefits. However, students face various barriers that cannot be ignored. One of the main challenges is limited time and commitment to learning. Mastering a new language requires dedication and constant effort. Many people struggle to balance learning with daily responsibilities and activities such as work, college, and family (Radwan, 2022). This often makes foreign languages a low priority and abandoned.

Another important challenge is the difficulty of understanding and practising the phonetics and grammar of a new language. Every language has a unique sound system and sentence structure, and when the destination language is much different from the native, this becomes a major obstacle. This difficulty is usually compounded by the lack of opportunities to practice with native speakers, which is vital to gaining correct pronunciation and understanding of everyday usage. Students without access to authentic learning environments may find it more difficult to achieve fluency (Szyszka, 2021).

The cultural aspects of a foreign language can also be a particular challenge. Language is not only made up of words and phrases, but also reflects cultural values, social norms, as well as specific idiomatic expressions. Understanding the cultural context of the language is essential for proper and natural usage. Often, students have to overcome their own cultural misunderstandings and prejudices. Without in-depth cultural understanding, language use can sound stilted or even disrespectful in certain situations, hindering the ability to communicate effectively (Miller & Crowther, 2023).

Finally, motivation and self-confidence are also crucial factors that can hinder foreign language learning. The learning process is full of obstacles and failures, which sometimes make students frustrated and lack confidence. Without strong motivation and adequate support, it is easy for students to feel discouraged or feel insufficiently proficient to reach the desired skill level (Andujar & Çakmak, 2020). Support from teachers, family and peers, as well as access to good learning resources, cannot be overlooked to keep motivation high and provide the boost needed to overcome these challenges (Yoshida, 2024).

Thus, although the study of a foreign language offers significant cognitive, social and financial benefits, students face a number of barriers that cannot be ignored. Time and commitment constraints are major barriers, while difficulties understanding new phonetics and grammar pose additional challenges. Lack of cultural understanding and connection as well as motivation and confidence challenges are also important factors that can hinder the learning process. Overcoming these requires strong support, access to effective learning resources and a supportive environment for students to overcome barriers and achieve proficiency in the foreign language being learnt.

Conclusion

Learning a foreign language is increasingly important in the age of globalisation because of the benefits it can offer. Firstly, foreign language proficiency enables more effective cross-cultural communication and expands career opportunities in the global labour market. Globalisation has connected countries and made international interactions more common, making the ability to speak more than one language a valuable skill. In the business world, foreign language competence can open up opportunities to work for multinational companies and participate in international projects.

In addition to economic benefits, foreign language learning also contributes to personal and intellectual development. Learning a new language can improve one's cognitive abilities, such as memory, problem-solving and creativity. Furthermore, an understanding of a foreign language enriches cultural horizons, allowing individuals to understand a broader global perspective and empathise with diverse cultures and traditions. Deeper interaction with different cultures not only enriches personal experiences, but also promotes tolerance and international co-operation.

To deal with the challenges involved in foreign language learning, such as time constraints, phonetic difficulties and cultural barriers, a strategic approach and adequate support are needed. Modern technology and innovative learning methods play an important role in overcoming these barriers, by providing easy access to educational resources and interactive platforms. Therefore, integrating foreign language learning in the education system and daily life is an important step to prepare future generations to face the demands of globalisation and effectively compete in the global landscape.

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